

A publication of the SALEM COUNTY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Mid Summer Safety Edition

# "It's the heat AND the humidity!"



Be careful not to let a heat-related illness spoil your fun activities under the sun!

## **Preventing Heat-Related Illness**

The body cools by heat escaping through the skin and by evaporating sweat (perspiration). If the body does not cool enough, the victim may suffer a heat-related illness. Anyone can be susceptible although the very young and very old are at greater risk. **Heat-related illnesses can become serious or even deadly if unattended.** 

- Dress for the heat. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing to reflect some sun away. Wear hats or use umbrella.
- **Drink water.** Carry and drink water or juice continuously even if not thirsty. Alcohol and caffeine dehydrate body.
- Eat small meals and eat more often. Avoid foods that are high in protein which increase metabolic heat.
- Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.
- Slow down. Avoid strenuous activity. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day.
- Stay indoors when possible.
- **Take regular breaks** when engaged in physical activity on warm days. If you recognize that you, or someone else, are showing the signals of a heat-related illness, stop activity and find a cool place.

#### Stages of Heat-Related Illness

1. The first stage is muscle heat cramps. Have the victim stop activity and rest. If fully awake and alert, have sufferer drink small amounts of cool water or commercial sports drink. Gently stretch the cramped muscle and hold stretch for about 20 seconds, then gently massage the muscle. Repeat if necessary. If cramps and other illness signals stop, person may resume activity.

- 2. The more serious stage is often called **heat exhaustion** showing cool, moist, pale skin (the skin may be red right after physical activity) with headache, dizziness, weakness or exhaustion. The skin may or may not feel hot.
- 3. The signals of the late stage of a heat-related illness (often called **heat stroke**) include vomiting, decreased alertness level or complete loss of consciousness, high body temperature (sometimes as high as 105°F) Skin may still be moist or the victim may stop sweating and the skin may be red, hot and dry. There may be a rapid, weak pulse and rapid, shallow breathing.

This late stage illness is <u>life threatening</u>. Call 9-1-1 or local emergency number.

## **General Care for Heat Emergencies**

For heat cramps or heat exhaustion: Get the person to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position. If the person is fully awake and alert, give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not let him or her drink too quickly. Do not give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them, as they can make conditions worse. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths such as towels or wet sheets. Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number if the person refuses water, vomits or loses consciousness.

For heat stroke: Heat stroke is a life-threatening situation! Quickly call 9-1-1 or your local EMS number. Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the body. Wrap wet sheets around the body and fan it. If you have ice packs or cold packs, wrap them in a cloth and place them on each of the victim's wrists and ankles, in the armpits and on the neck to cool the large blood vessels. (Do not use rubbing alcohol because it closes the skin's pores and prevents heat loss.) Watch for signals of breathing problems and make sure the airway is clear. Keep the person lying down.

So have fun in the sun with any activity you choose, but be careful!





# Watch for Kids!

Please send your safety news to Curt Harker, Archives/Records Office, 935-7510 X8553.